

GUIDELINES FOR PROCEEDINGS BEFORE JUDGE VRATIL

December 2, 2014

JURY UTILIZATION: To ensure efficient and cost effective jury utilization, the court's goal is that the jury will hear at least seven hours of uninterrupted testimony every single day of trial. The chief cause of trial delay is the bench conference which interrupts the presentation of evidence to the jury. With thoughtful planning and without prejudice to any party, the Court hopes to hear and decide all legal issues without disrupting the continuity of trial. To accomplish this goal and to make sure that counsel have sufficient opportunity to anticipate legal issues, witnesses and exhibits expected to be used in the trial must be disclosed to opposing counsel 24 hours in advance. In this way, counsel will have time to raise an issue the next day either before the jury is seated or during one of the recesses.

EXHIBITS: Counsel should provide the Court a copy of exhibits to be considered at the outset of hearings or trial. Please advise the courtroom deputy of any stipulated exhibits, so the Court can receive them into evidence at the beginning of trial.

Counsel are responsible for maintaining the official exhibit list. Counsel shall mark the official exhibit list (maintained on the front table in the courtroom) during breaks or at the conclusion of each trial day. The Court will also keep a record of exhibits. When an exhibit has been admitted, the original copy shall be placed on the front table in the courtroom. The original exhibits shall not be moved by counsel. At the end of each trial day, counsel must review admitted exhibits with the courtroom deputy or law clerk.

DEMONSTRATIVE DEVICES: Overhead projectors, whiteboards, screens, chalkboards, easels, televisions, videocassette recorders, and other demonstrative devices are available for your use, depending on availability. Contact Sherry Bernhardt, courtroom deputy, at 913-735-2305 with any questions.

The courtroom is equipped with an evidence presentation stand that includes monitors for presentation of evidence at the bench, witness stand, counsel tables and jury box. This includes video playing and use with laptop computers. Training on this system may be scheduled by contacting the courtroom deputy.

TRIAL PROCEDURE AND HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS:

First day of trial: On the first day of trial, counsel should to be present at 9:00 a.m. At that time, counsel will go over court procedures with the courtroom deputy, Sherry Bernhardt.

Court reporting: If your witnesses will present testimony containing unusual or technical vocabulary, prepare a list of such correctly spelled names and terms for the court reporter. Any questions regarding transcripts should be directed to the court reporter.

Jury selection: In a civil jury trial, the court will seat eight jurors. Each side will have three peremptory challenges. The Court will conduct the initial voir dire process, but counsel will be allowed additional time for supplemental interrogation. The Court will typically inquire concerning the following subjects:

- a. Biographical information, including the prospective juror's job, spouse's job, marital status, number of children, and educational background;
- b. Whether jurors have personal knowledge of case;
- c. Any knowledge of attorneys or law firms trying the case;
- d. Any knowledge of witnesses likely to testify;
- e. Prior service as jurors;
- f. Prior involvement in litigation as plaintiff, defendant, witness, etc.;
- g. Personal experience with subject matter of law suit;
- h. Medical circumstances or personal reasons why prospective juror could not serve.

Counsel need not propose voir dire questions on these subjects. Counsel are cautioned that in conducting their portion of the voir dire process, they shall not

- a. Argue to the jury;
- b. Ask for promises from the jury;
- c. Examine jurors concerning matters of law;
- d. Examine jurors concerning jury instructions;
- e. Examine jurors concerning opinions based on hypothetical facts; or
- f. Otherwise attempt to ingratiate or indoctrinate the jury.

Jurors: Jurors will be permitted to take notes. In addition, the Court may allow jurors to ask questions throughout the trial. Any questions shall be screened before they are addressed in open court.

Courtroom etiquette:

Stand as court is opened, recessed, and adjourned. Stand when the jury enters, or retires, from the courtroom. Stand when addressing, or being addressed by, the Court. Counsel with physical disabilities are excused from these requirements.

Refer to all persons, including witnesses, other counsel, and the parties, by their surnames (preceded by Mr., Ms. or other title), *not by their first names or nicknames.*

Your compliance with these guidelines is appreciated.